

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

NOVEMBER 1996

ONE DOLLAR



Director's Column

William L. Woodfin, Jr

This is the hunting time of year, and as you make your final preparations we want to tell you a few things that we hope will enhance your time in the field.

As always, we want to emphasize responsibility and safety first. Our Hunting and Trapping pamphlet is available wherever hunting licenses are sold, and on page 25 of that publication you will read that "every hunter or person accompanying a hunter during a general firearms deer season, shall wear a blaze orange hat or blaze orange upper body clothing that is visible from 360 degrees or display at least 100 square inches of solid blaze orange material at shoulder level within body reach and visible from 360 degrees." There are a few exceptions to the blaze orange rule—muzzleloader season, waterfowl hunting, participants in hunting dog field trials and fox hunters on horseback without firearms—but proper blaze orange clothing is vital to safety in the general firearms season.

Perhaps the most important guideline of hunter safety is the accurate identification of legal game. This principle bears repeating again and again, to yourself and to others. Hunters must know they have legal game in their sights, and they must know that if a shot misses, it will not create danger to others. For the sake of everyone involved, we must be committed to this level of safe hunting.

The Department of Game and Inland Fisheries offers various programs that stress safe conduct afield, and one of our newest efforts is drawing a lot of attention. Virginia's program for outdoors women is receiving a tremendous response, as we saw in September at the event at

Appomattox. There were almost 100 participants, and the testimonials ran from positive to ecstatic. The participants particularly enjoyed the skeet range. For many, this was the first time they had fired a shotgun. As the women pointed out, the individual training for firearms safety, the comradery of the learning experience, the low pressure environment of the weekend, and the great feeling of being in the outdoors made it all worthwhile. Participants ranged in age from 21 to 71.

I would like to make a suggestion to our male readers who may have complained in the past about women not understanding their devotion to the hunt and their love of the outdoors. This coming holiday season is a chance for you to prove that you want your mother, wife, daughter or friend to understand. You can give her the gift of attending a "Becoming an Outdoor Women" seminar. I encourage you to contact us and get the details for next year's events.

As many of you know, we are a proven source of solid information on the outdoors. Our information office receives from 50 to 100 phone calls a day, and up to 2,000 a month, and we are now offering an additional way for our customers to get the information they want. The Department is pleased to tell you that our information weekly, *The Outdoor Report*, is now on-line. The *Outdoor Report* has been sent for years to its intended audience of writers and reporters, but now it's available on the Internet at www.state.va.us/~dgif/index.htm. This will provide you with a quick, affordable weekly update of outdoor opportunities across the Commonwealth.

However, even if you can pull outdoor information off the Internet, you probably know we have other good sources of information.



Lee Walker

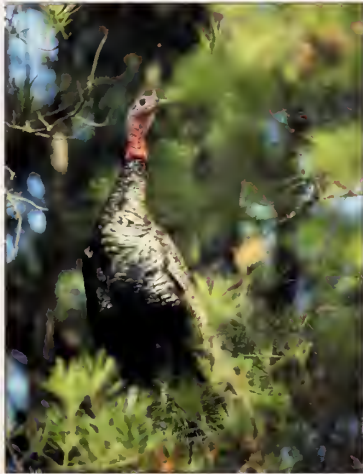
Our *Virginia Hunting Guide* is available at many license agents, or by writing the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, 4010 West Broad Street, P.O. Box 11104, Richmond, VA, 23230. You can also obtain our *Guide to Wildlife Management Areas* by writing VIB, P.O. Box 27563, Richmond, VA, 23261. The cost is \$5 for handling and mailing. It can also be picked up free of charge at any VDGF office.

Of course, if you're a subscriber, you know that the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has one of the finest wildlife magazines anywhere. In the coming year *Virginia Wildlife* will provide coverage of hunting, fishing, wildlife and fisheries management, wildlife viewing and boating in Virginia, with a focus on our management efforts on behalf of the resources. If you need to renew your subscription, or if you want to give subscriptions for gifts, you can call 1-800-710-9369. You can use a credit card, or we'll be happy to bill you.

This is a great time of year, and as you head for the duck blind or the deer stand, please remember that safety and responsibility are the most important parts of the hunt. Have a great time. □



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Cover: Background photo by ©Dwight Dyke, buck by Bill Lea


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Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources



Beagles and Bu

by Bob Gooch

It was cold that December day. The week before Christmas. Scattered patches of snow from an early blizzard lingered on the north slopes beyond the reach of the sun. A crisp morning. The field was covered with frost, and the air thin and still. An ideal day for the hunt. The cries of the pack of little beagles would ring clearly in the cold thin air. Anticipation ran high among the small group of assembled hunters.

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Rabbit hunters are a gregarious group.

The hunters gathered for a quick huddle. Our plan was to work a cut-over area along the edge of the field. "Logged a couple of years ago and plenty of laps," someone had said. "Good cover for rabbits. They feed in the field and take cover in the laps."

As I listened many happy memories came flooding back. I once owned a pack of little beagles. Friendly, but independent, little

nnies

shoot a rabbit or not so long as I can hear the dogs run." I'm not sure that beagle owners don't often pass up shots so they can prolong the joy of the chase.

Those were happy hunting years, but alas, the rabbit populations took an unexplained plunge a couple of decades ago. All but disappeared. Many hunters sold their beagles and turned to other kinds of hunting. I held on for awhile—until attrition claimed all of my hounds. Then quail and my English setters filled the void. Versatility seems to be the answer to modern small-game hunting. I haven't given up on bird hunting yet, but my interest in beagles and rabbit hunting has been revived.

Our plan set, the huddle broke up and we scattered to select stands. I found a likely spot and a solid stump on which I could stand. It would provide a better view of the route I hoped a rabbit, pursued by the hounds, would take.

Cottontails are homebodies, and when jumped from their forms they make a circle and eventually head for home. Some seem to make wide circles and run for a mile or more while others swing back almost before hunters are comfortable on their stands. Much depends upon how hard the beagles press the quarry. And I suppose the older, hardier rabbits are inclined to travel farther from home than are the young of the year.

Much of the hunter's success depends upon the selection of a stand. Experienced hunters seem to possess some instinct that places them on the most likely return route. Staying reasonably close to the jump area increases your chances as the cottontail will eventually work its way back to that area. Its home territory and it feels comfortable there. You run the risk, of course, that a fellow hunter will intercept the rabbit before it reaches you.

Rabbits don't have much trouble maintaining a safe distance between themselves and the hounds. Once they have established that distance they tend to stick with some kind of cover. Pine forests are popular. So are strips of trees such as bottle-necks. Bottoms along streams are also good. Keep this in mind when looking for a stand.

Getting off a decent shot dictates that you catch a fleeing bunny in the clear. Look for openings the rabbit may be forced to cross, old logging roads, for example. Most hunters look for stands that will hopefully offer that opportunity. A little elevation improves your visibility. That's why I selected that old stump.

A cottontail stretched out with all of its burners charged can be a tough shot. These spurts of speed are usually temporary, an attempt to quickly escape immediate danger. Once that has been done it slows its pace considerably. A rabbit headed for home and well ahead of the hounds

Where's the best place? Much of a rabbit hunter's success depends upon his selection of a stand. (Right) Happy to leave the box, beagles are always eager to hunt.



©Dwight Dyke

cusses. They loved to hunt, and their tails carried erect and curling slightly over their backs wagged constantly showing joy and contentment. Once they picked up a scent those tails really got into the action.

We enjoyed many crisp winter days together, often in the company of other hunters and their own little hounds. Get a half dozen or so on a hot bunny trail and the music was loud and beautiful. "Just love to hear them run," was an often repeated comment. "Don't care whether I

often hops along, pausing frequently with its long antenna ears tuned for sounds of danger and its eyes alert. Such a rabbit is not a tough shot. Some hunters even carry .22 rifles instead of shotguns and await such shots. Occasionally the rabbit may simply stop to look and listen—a very easy shot.

The rabbit's fur is rich, but its skin is as thin as paper. Compare it sometime with the tough hide of a gray squirrel. Many hunters carry 12 gauge shotguns loaded with high-brass size 6 loads. They're overgunned in my opinion. A light 20-gauge with an improved cylinder choke and light size 8 field loads will do the job well. Many small-game hunters switch back and forth between rabbits and quail or doves with the same gun and load.

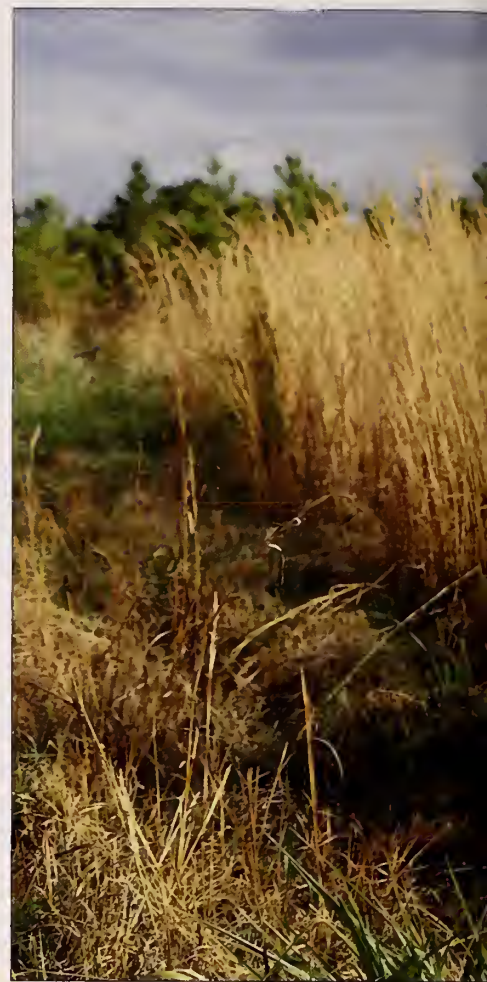
The ideal pack of hunting beagles contains at least one good jump dog, and several good trail hounds. Many beagles are hot on the trail once a rabbit is up and running, but seem to lack the ability to locate and rout out rabbits. I've seen some top trail hounds that are mediocre jump dogs at best. On the other hand there are good jump dogs that are simply too slow to keep up with a fast chase. One of my neighbors once owned such a beagle. Named Jon Jon, he was a cute little hound who seemed to possess a unique sense for locating cottontails holed up in their forms. He usually stayed close to the hunters, but always hunted hard—looking and sniffing. Suddenly he would cry out with a warning yip or two and then take off in hot pursuit of a rabbit fresh out of its form. His excited cries would quickly attract the remainder of the pack and the chase was on. Jon Jon would try, but could never keep up with the faster chase beagles. He would eventually wander back and begin hunting for another rabbit. The value of such a beagle as Jon Jon is beyond calculation.

Hunters who do not own crack jump dogs spend a lot of time wading through briers, kicking honeysuckle, and jumping on brushpiles in an effort to get rabbits up and moving. Do that all day and you are ready for a hot shower and a good night's sleep. The modern cottontail, concealed by its natural camouflage, does not spook easily. You have to all but step on it. Experienced hunters learn to look for the dark shiny eyes of the rabbit. They sometimes give away its location.

The need for a good jump dog or two does not negate the need for good trail hounds. Wise old rabbits are adept at throwing dogs off of their trail. One favorite trick is to halt briefly, run a short route, reverse that route, and take off in an entirely different direction. It's called backtracking. I've watched deer use the same tactic. One of my best beagles was a sturdy little hound that I called Tuck. He was primarily a trail hound. I watched one day as he worked a trail near my stand. The trail seemed to evaporate, but that didn't fool Tuck for a single minute. He picked it up again, reversed his direction, came back to where the rabbit had paused, and then took eagerly off on the correct trail. Soon a shot ahead told me that one of my friends had bagged the rabbit that couldn't outwit old Tuck.

The Virginia rabbit hunting season is long, opening in early November and running through January. Late winter and early fall is rabbit hunting time, and that means all kinds of weather—rain, snow, cold, a few unseasonably warm days, periods of dryness, and long wet spells. Dry weather is probably the worst as the ground does not hold scent as well as when it's moist. Cold weather is fine though the rabbits may tend to hole up more. Hot weather is tough on both hunters and beagles. Too much rain may destroy scent, but beagles don't seem to have much trouble with trailing when snow is on the ground.

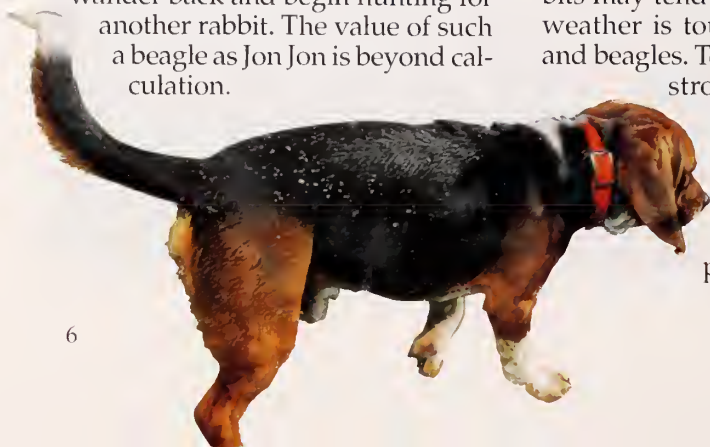
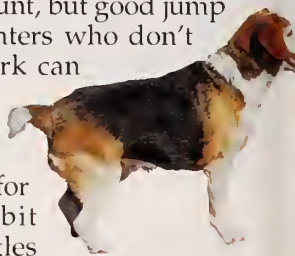
Rabbits feed and play at night so early



morning is a good time for the beagles to pick up scent. It's a good time to kick off a hunt, but good jump dogs and hunters who don't mind the work can get rabbits up and going all day.

Obviously for serious rabbit hunters, beagles are the very heart of the hunt. Without them hunting would be reduced to kicking the critters up and shooting them on the jump, something most beagle owners are reluctant to do. To do so is depriving the little hounds the joy of the chase and hunters the pleasure of the beagle music.

The beagle is a unique little hound. It is not a down-sized foxhound as some believe. In fact the beagle was a predecessor of the fox-





Rabbit hunting is easier and more productive with a pack of hounds making music on the trail. Photos ©Dwight Dyke.

hound, and introduced to America early in the 19th century. The breed was developed in Europe for the purpose of hunting rabbits—just as it does in America today. Early settlers apparently found an abundance of cottontails.

The sturdy little hound immediately established itself as a fixture in the American sporting dogs family. The beagle may be of any true hound color, but is typically a mixture of black, tan, and white.

Pint-sized is the usual adjective applied to the little hounds. They average between 11 and 15 inches in height at the shoulder. Hunters frequently speak of their beagles in terms of their shoulder height—a 13 inch beagle, for example. Size actually has little to do with the stamina or working qualities of

the animal. Nor of its ability as a hunting dog.

Selecting dogs with good blood lines is more important than extensive training. Pick a good dog and his instinct will take over. Let it spot a rabbit for the first time and it's likely to give chase. I sometimes put out box traps, take the animals alive, and release them in front of developing beagles. Quick way to introduce them to the

quarry. Once they get the taste of



the chase they need little additional training. Most hunters, however, keep packs of beagles of various

ages, and they add to their packs as necessary by bringing in young dogs. Once a pup has grown to the age he can keep up with the pack, it becomes a part of the pack. That's all the training it needs.

Beagles by nature remain reasonably close to their masters. Walking and working with the pups prior to their being introduced to the pack gets them accustomed to being with you. You can introduce them to riding in a vehicle, responding to their names, and coming when called. The ease with which they can be trained is one of the attractions of the breed.

We have talked primarily in terms of packs of beagles, but this doesn't mean that a good dog won't hunt by itself. My first beagles were a pair, a brother and sister, and I enjoyed many hours of successful hunting with them.

Now back to that December hunt.

Once the hunters were in place, the hounds were released. They shuffled about for a few minutes and then hit the laps, and almost immediately had a chase going. I listened intently as the bedlam moved off and eventually almost disappeared. But then it came back into hearing clear and sharp and moved toward my stand. I expected the bunny to appear at any moment. I grasped my old scattergun carefully and prepared to shoot.

There it was! Tipping along and heading toward the nearby stand of a youthful hunter. I decided to pass and let the kid take him. So far the young hunter had not spotted the rabbit. I waited. Then the rabbit paused again, ears alert—and suddenly started off in another direction! Time was limited. It would be out of sight in the laps momentarily. Frantically I brought my little 20-gauge to my shoulder, swung on the rapidly disappearing rabbit and hit the trigger! A lucky shot. The rabbit did a flip flop and lay still.

Next time, kid, I thought as I went to retrieve my game. □

Bob Gooch is an outdoor columnist and has authored many books on hunting and fishing. He lives in Troy, near Charlottesville.

The Forest Stewardship Habitat Help

by David Sausville



If you want to improve the conditions for wildlife, you need to improve the habitat. Foresters and wildlife biologists can work with you to improve your timber and wildlife benefits. The Forest

Stewardship Program was developed by the Virginia Department of Forestry (VDOF) to improve the management of private forest lands in Virginia. This statewide landowner assistance program is a cooperative venture between VDOF and the many state and federal natural resource agencies and conservation organizations.

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) is a very active cooperator, providing wildlife management

expertise to thousands of landowners. Recent surveys have shown that many landowners cite values such as viewing wildlife and maintaining scenic beauty as primary reasons for owning forest land. With advice from natural resource professionals, landowners can use proven practices to get the maximum benefits from their woodland resources.

The program is available to any Virginia landowner who has 10 or more forested acres. The program has the potential to benefit a diversity of wildlife found in Virginia. With the professional expertise offered in this program, landowners concerned about wildlife habitat have access to the best biological data, enabling them to take positive steps to

"make it happen" for wildlife on their own property. For example, landowners tell us about their success with increasing deer and turkey numbers, as well as greater numbers of butterflies on a site



Stewardship Program: for Landowners



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DGIF biologist Albert Bourgeois (left) works with VDOF Area Forester Mark Hollberg, and a landowner to create a brushpile for rabbits.

that improved because of a prescribed burn.

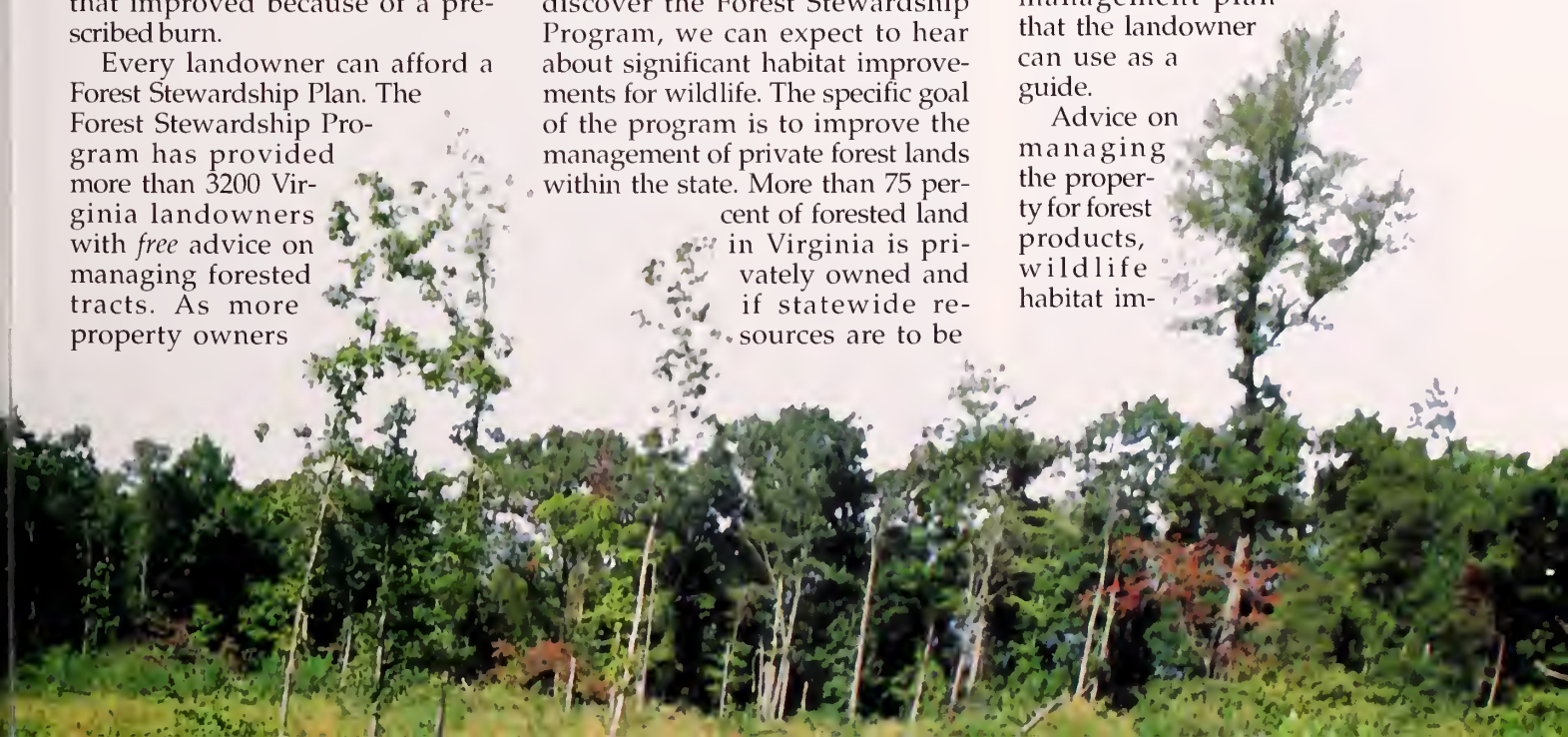
Every landowner can afford a Forest Stewardship Plan. The Forest Stewardship Program has provided more than 3200 Virginia landowners with *free* advice on managing forested tracts. As more property owners

discover the Forest Stewardship Program, we can expect to hear about significant habitat improvements for wildlife. The specific goal of the program is to improve the management of private forest lands within the state. More than 75 percent of forested land in Virginia is privately owned and if statewide resources are to be

managed for both economic and environmental benefits, private landowners need to be involved. The Forest Stewardship Program helps landowners accomplish these goals.

To obtain professional advice, or to receive a written Forest Stewardship Plan, landowners need to call the numbers provided at the end of this article, their County Forester, a private consulting forester, or an Industry Landowner Assistance Forester who has been specially trained and certified to prepare a Forest Stewardship plan. Landowners are encouraged by the resource professionals to ask many questions regarding their options for management activities. Once goals have been set, several other professionals, including wildlife biologists, botanists, recreational planners, and historians may be contacted to develop an all encompassing management plan that the landowner can use as a guide.

Advice on managing the property for forest products, wildlife habitat im-





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Above: Author David Sausville (left) and VDOF Area Forester Paul Geyer (right) observe as landowner Russell Holland (center) begins to carry out a prescribed burn on his property. *Right:* Sausville and landowner Joe Wirt discuss vegetation regrowth one year after a prescribed burn.

Facing page: Landowners tell us about their success with increasing the numbers of deer and turkey on sites that have been improved because of a planned burn. The VDOF has placed the Forest Stewardship Program and many other resources fully behind VDGIFs' Bobwhite Quail Management Plan.



©Dwight Dyke

provements, recreation, or other goals is designed on a parcel by parcel basis, with regard for the ecosystem. A map of the property, a five year management schedule, and additional information is supplied in a three-ring binder for easy record keeping.

The Forest Stewardship Program offers a limited cost share program to landowners for implementing certain conservation practices. The cost share program is designed to help landowners accomplish management practices that will benefit their land and other statewide re-

sources by bringing practices within financial reach.

Cost shared practices have to be maintained for 10 years, which, in terms of long range planning is not as long as it sounds. Landowners do not have to use cost share and all practices are voluntary. Landowners are encouraged, but not required to follow recommended practices.

However, it is important to note that cost share is not a driving force behind the Forest Stewardship Program. Experience over the past five years has shown that many landowners are completing conservation practices without cost share assistance. With advice and guidance from professionals, many practices can be performed at a low cost and in conjunction with other practices.

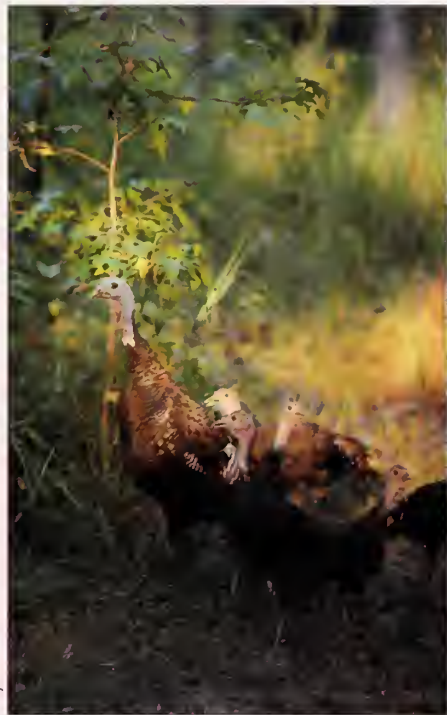
The Forest Stewardship Program is designed to help landowners improve their land and leave it in better shape than they found it.

Many practices can receive cost share monies within the Forest Stewardship Program. The cost share rate varies among the practices. Other cost share programs for tree planting and erosion control are also available through the County Forester. The VDOF has placed the Forest Stewardship Program and many other resources fully behind the VDGI's Bobwhite Quail Management Plan. Cost shared practices include, but are not limited to:

- ✿ site preparation for planting trees and other wildlife cover
- ✿ precommercial thinning to improve tree growth
- ✿ control of undesirable species
- ✿ prescribe burning for wildlife habitat and hardwood improvement
- ✿ establishment of grasses for wildlife to enhance nesting and feeding areas
- ✿ fencing to keep livestock out of forest and streamside protection areas
- ✿ fertilizer and lime
- ✿ wildlife corridors



Lloyd Hill



Lloyd Hill



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Through participation in the Forest Stewardship Program this emerging pine forest, as well as other lands, can provide many hunting opportunities.

At this time cost share funding does not have to be claimed as income according to Internal Revenue Service Ruling 94-27, (April 11, 1994).

Advanced planning is one of the greatest advantages that the Forest Stewardship Program offers landowners. Having professionals review the property with the landowner allows a landowner to realize the full potential of the site for whatever goals are desired. As with retirement, those who have planned often have a higher quality

of living because of their planning efforts. Those of us who wait until the last minute often lose out.

If you are interested in developing a management plan for your property or would like more information, contact your County Forester. Additional information may also be obtained by calling the Department of Forestry's central office or the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries' Stewardship Biologist, at the addresses and phone numbers listed right:

Virginia Department of Forestry
P.O. Box 3758
Charlottesville, VA 22903
(804) 977-6555

David Sausville
Virginia Department of Game and
Inland Fisheries
P.O. Box 635
Sandston, VA 23150
(804) 328-3031

David Sausville is a wildlife biologist with the Department's Wildlife Division working on the Forest Stewardship Program.



Quality Deer Management on Small Acreage



by Tom Barnett

Quality deer management is the use of restraint in harvesting bucks combined with an adequate harvest of antlerless deer to maintain a healthy population that is in balance with existing habitat conditions. Implementing quality deer management on small acreage is mostly a thought process. Deer require certain basic requirements before setting up housekeeping on small parcels of property. The better these basics are met, the better the deer environment will be. Then more can be had on less space. While we all dream of the Hartford Buck, most of us are willing to accept deer hunting more realistic than magazine cover material.

Many hunt clubs control thousands of acres and have the potential to accomplish quality management results. Most don't. The average deer hunter does not hunt on large tracts of land. Quality deer management of properties large or small is with basic biology and some common sense. With a little effort, you can have your cake and eat it too, even on small parcels of property. The difference is in attitude and expectations. Today's short-term decisions have a long-term impact into the quality of future hunting.



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A deer's home is a healthy habitat requiring four things: food, cover, water, and space, with these being close together and accessible. Multiply the acreage with these basics, and the deer will multiply with it. The more you apply the basic variables of habitat management, the quality of animals harvested improves. Quality deer hunting requires having quality bucks, quality does, and quality fawns on quality habitat. Sounds simple doesn't it? Instead of considering yourself a "deer hunter," consider yourself as a "deer manager."

Antler development (top) over the years depends partly on the availability of food, water, and good habitat.

(Above) Wildlife biologists survey a man-made watering hole for deer tracks.

(Facing page, top) Bucks with antlers like this can be a result of quality management. Part of that management involves providing good food. VDGIF provides advice to landowners through its DMAP program.

(Right) Whitetail buck feeds on poke berries.

Each small parcel to be hunted/managed is a stand alone evaluation. The first consideration is the land itself. Is it public or private? Obviously, when hunting on public property, you have no control over access. If it is private, make sure



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your property is properly posted. Is there a poaching problem? If so, gain as much information as possible, and use the 1-800-237-5712 Law Enforcement Hot Line phone number to help the local game warden to help you. Many hunters have multiple parcels available to hunt, all too small for hunt club status, and frequently not adjacent to another. Due to variables in properties and their surrounding acreage, the management objectives for one parcel may be different from the others.

Harvest data is a must in understanding the health of the deer herd you will be managing. This is similar

to your doctor's office taking your pulse, blood pressure, temperature, etc. What are the patient's (deer herd) vital signs? The tools are simple, and the information gained only takes a few minutes per deer harvested. What sex is the harvested deer, how old is it, and how much does it weigh? If it is a buck, what is the thickness of the antler base and how wide is the spread? A spike buck may be a healthy late conceived yearling, or his antler development could be stunted due to nutritional deficiencies frequently caused by over population. What percentage of the bucks have been harvested before reaching 3 1/2 years old? These questions and much more can only be answered by using the tools used to gain basic biological data. Over time, trends will probably develop helping you to decide your management objectives.

On the majority of the land not under an on-going quality management program, bucks have been over harvested for decades, while does have been under harvested. Population sex ratios are frequently skewed. The acreage has been hunted but has not been managed. You now have an opportunity to have some control over the destiny of your future hunting success. Property can never be too large to manage. The smaller it is, the more difficult it is to control animals that roam a thousand acres. Setting reasonable

goals and having full hunter / manager participation of commitment is required for successful quality deer management.

When managing larger parcels, your options are greater. If quality deer management is desired, it is more realistic even though you may not have total control. Adjoining property hunting pressure [high or low] plays into your decisions. Can you broker a gentleman's agreement with any of the adjacent users? Even if adjoining hunting groups do not agree with all of your objectives, every young antlered buck passed up has some chance of becoming larger.

Just as habitat can support only so many deer, habitat can support only so much hunting pressure. Each deer harvested should be a management decision. Evaluate if too many friends are over pressuring the habitat, and if you are losing management opportunities. Goals for quality deer management should not include the killing of the maximum quantity of deer possible.

Cultivate a good relationship with the landowner. Find out their wishes, and obey them. Seek ways to assist them with labor to make life easier while respecting their property. Foster good relations with neighbors. There is a good chance they are friends and with good relations, they may decide to let you hunt their property. Ask for a copy of the



Good hunting in the future depends on quality deer management.

landowner's surveys, or acquire tax map plats to learn the property's boundary lines. Help them post, and maintain fences, etc. While learning the property's boundaries and cultivating good landowner relationships, you are learning the property's habitat.

One of the keys for success is being open-minded and objective. Find out ways to improve the basics: food, cover, water, and space. The Virginia Department of Forestry sells a variety of young trees including pine seedlings, which can grow to provide cover, sponging deer into the habitat. With good relations, you can develop the ability to have game plots, deer mineral blocks, or some crops not harvested to serve as game plots.

Traditionally, hunters have shot what has been in season, bucks, and later the does. To have quality head gear, young bucks must be allowed to grow. The survival rate of antlered bucks are considerably less than most hunters realize. Being more nomadic than the homebody does, and the target of choice for decades, bucks are more prone to hunting and natural mortality. The "average" survival rates of bucks are: In a given year for each 100 buck fawns added in a typical hunted

population, approximately 35 percent will die as fawns, 40 percent will die as yearlings, 20 percent will die as 2 1/2-year-olds, leaving about 5 percent to survive to 3 1/2 years of age, where quality racks begin. Maybe a mere 1 percent will live to be 4 1/2-year-olds, where trophy status is achievable. Bucks reach maximum weight and rack size at 4 1/2 - 7 1/2 years old! If you wonder where all the big bucks are, they probably were shot three years ago! If a buck's antlers do not exceed the spread of the ears (16 inches), or have heavy mass, you are probably looking at an immature buck. Consider letting it go! Only if allowed to achieve maturity will bucks have a good chance of owning the rack size you are looking for!

To help landowners with deer population management, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries offers management tools such as the Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP). DMAP is an exchange system. If the program users will provide basic biological data on the deer harvested, antlerless deer tags are offered to the hunter/managers. Data for deer management (on or off a DMAP program) is the same. Each animal harvested must be weighed, jaw-

bones extracted for aging, antlers measured, etc. This is how the deer herd's vital signs are evaluated, along with trends in the age verses size of animals harvested. The harvesting of does allows the hunter/manager to bring home some tasty venison while allowing immature bucks to reach maturity. Ratio imbalances have a potential opportunity to be rebalanced. Late dropped fawns with low survival rates can be reduced. Quality deer management can correct our mistakes of the past.

To get the most on small parcels of property, remember that each step is a management decision. Get all hunter/managers to make the commitment for quality deer management. Above all else, have fun while hunting safely. Wear blaze orange.

Editor's note: Many thanks to the Quality Deer Management Association for allowing information from their book, *Quality Whitetails* to be used in this article. For more information on the Association or their book on quality white-tailed deer management, write or call the: Quality Deer Management Association, PO Box 707, Walterboro, SC 29488, 1-800-209-DEER. □

Tom Barnett is a freelance outdoor writer who lives in Glen Allen.

A photograph of a wild turkey perched on a pine branch, looking to the right. The turkey has a red head and neck, and dark, patterned feathers. The background is a dense, out-of-focus pine forest.

TIPS FOR FALL TURKEY HUNTING

by Gerald Almy

Want a wild turkey on your Thanksgiving table? Here's some tips to help you along.

Mention wild turkey hunting and most people conjure up an April morning with a camo-clad hunter hunkered against a thick-girthed tree trying to call in a gobbling tom with its feathers puffed out in a regal fan. No question that is an exciting time to hunt turkeys, but some of the most enjoyable sport for these big game birds takes place right now, during the fall season.

Fall turkey hunting has attractions that make some sportsmen actually prefer it to spring. A big fall attraction is that turkey populations are at a peak. Spring-born flocks are still mostly intact and numbers are far higher than they will be after the birds have endured the ravages of winter. Many of the turkeys are young-of-the-year, too, making them easier to call. Both hens and gobblers are legal in the fall, and birds move in large flocks, thus leaving more sign and noise as they move through the woods.

But turkey hunting in autumn has plenty of challenge to make it appealing, too. You have to do more hunting in the fall, instead of just listening for gobbling birds. Often the fall turkey hunter will cover miles of ground in a day's search for one or two flocks that he or she can rush into, scatter, then call back with clucks, yelps and kee-kees.

This fall turkey hunters will be faced with a shorter time frame to bag a bird. To improve turkey numbers, the Virginia Game Department shortened the season to six weeks. This is still one of the longest fall seasons in the country, though—plenty of time to bag the main course for a Thanksgiving or Christmas dinner. To make the most of your time afield here are 30 tips on bagging a fall turkey.



Almy

Start with the right firearm. Twelve gauges chambered for 3 1/2 inch shells are "standard" in this part of the country. A 20-gauge will work well out to about 30 yards. So hunters are using the 10-gauge guns that are becoming popular for waterfowl again.

Fall turkey guns should be choked full or extra-full. Shots should only be taken at the head and neck for a quick, humane kill and the tightest patterns work best for this. If you can afford it, fire at turkey head targets using several different brands of shells in copper-plated shot, sizes 4, 5 or 6, to see which performs best in your gun.



Almy

Shotguns should be either camouflaged or have dull, Parkerized barrels and an oil-finished stock. Tapes and spray paint can be used to camouflage the gun, but more and more are coming that way from the store.



Dyke

If you are on private property and know there are no other hunters around, wear camouflage clothing from head to toe. Either leaf or tree bark-type patterns or combinations of those are best. Wear face paints, powders or a mask to hide your face and gloves to cover your hands. Fall birds see just as sharply as spring ones.



Dyke

If you are hunting where other people might be around, wear some blaze orange or place it near your position when you set up to call. Remember that there's some other game in season throughout the turkey season. If you harvest a turkey, always place it in a bag or wrap blaze orange material around it before carrying it out of the woods.



Lloyd Hill

Equip your gun with a sling. Fall turkey hunting means lots of walking and it will cut down the physical strain of the hunt to have the gun's weight hanging on your shoulder for much of the day. You seldom need the firearm for quick shots, anyway, since mostly you'll be trying to locate and break up flocks, then set up and call them back for the shot.

Besides a camouflaged, full-choked gun, you'll need a vest to carry shells, calls, knife, insect repellent, compass, topo map, camera and other gear. Choose one with a padded seat that folds down so you can sit still longer with less discomfort when calling in birds.

Calls that can be used to lure in fall turkeys include the box, slate,



Careful hunting will put a scene like this in front of your shotgun

glass, diaphragm and push pen. All will work, but on any given bird one may perform better than the other. The successful hunter carries two or three types and offers the birds a second or third choice if they don't respond to the first one.



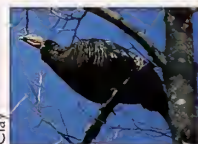
✓ Practice calling by watching a good instructional video, listening to an audio tape or getting a veteran hunter to teach you. Learn the cluck, purr, lost call, yelp and kee-kee and you'll know all of the most important sounds for fall hunting.

✓ Obviously, your chances increase when you're hunting in the most turkey-saturated woods you can in the fall. Finding birds is the biggest challenge you face. The



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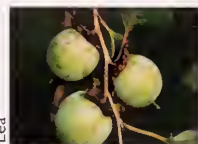
denser the area's population, the better your odds of encountering a flock. Check with game wardens, biologists, sporting goods store workers, farmers, foresters and mail carriers to see where they've observed birds. Once you have a lead on a good area or have seen birds in a location in the past, the work begins. First, make sure you have permission to hunt the property. Don't just ask, talk to the landowner if you can. Who should know the place better?



Clay

✓ Try to discover a pattern of movement the flock is using. Determine where it roosts,

waters, what areas it feeds in and where it loafs and dusts during mid-day. Search water holes for fresh tracks during dry weather. Turkeys go to water every day unless the woods are wet. With this knowledge you can often pinpoint where you can intercept the birds.



Lea

✓ Search for favorite fall turkey foods on scouting trips and while hunting. These include grapes, acorns, chufa, green-

brier, persimmon, corn, clover, hawthorne, mountain ash, berries, insects such as beetles, grasshoppers, crickets, grubs, and larvae.

✓ Search for fresh turkey sign such as droppings, loose feathers, dusting areas and scratchings in the leaves. You can tell which way the birds are going by the direction the leaves are piled up. A turkey rakes leaves towards it as it searches for food, so they are piled up in the direction it's come from.

✓ Check the freshness of sign by how moist the ground is where the turkey scratched and how many leaves have blown back into the cleared spot.

✓ When searching for turkeys, use your ears as well as your eyes. Turkeys purr and sometimes cluck or kee-kee as they feed through the woods. They also make a racket as they walk and scratch to get to food beneath the leaves. Often you'll hear the quarry before you actually see it.

✓ Use binoculars occasionally to scan ahead and to check out objects far away that might be turkeys. Lightweight seven to eight power models are best.

✓ Pause occasionally to call as you hunt—every few hundred yards if you are in prime turkey territory. Sometimes you can elicit a response



from a flock that you didn't know was in the area. You can try to call the whole group in, or plan your approach to scatter the birds and then call them back. You also might locate single birds that got separated from the flock and are eager for companionship. These are fairly easy to lure in. Yelps, lost calls, clucks and kee-kees are all useful.

✓ If the woods are dry and you can't walk quietly, try scuffling your foot occasionally. This will make you sound like another turkey scratching in the leaves to any birds nearby.

✓ If you can, try to roost birds the night before you go hunting. Start

listening about 30 minutes before sunset for sounds of whooshing wings and snapping branches or soft calls as turkeys fly up into tree branches to settle in for the night. If you can pinpoint a roosting spot, you can be positioned there early the next morning and try to either call some of the flock in as they come out of the trees or scatter them and then call the birds back.

✓ Even if you don't have birds roosted, get into prime turkey range at first light and listen. The woods are quiet at dawn and you can often hear birds clucking and yelping before they fly down off the roost, then purring on the ground. Sneak close and try to call one or two of the birds



Gerald Almy

to you or wait until they hit the ground then scatter the group.

✓ When you spot a flock of turkeys in the fall a quick decision is necessary. If you haven't been seen, you can try circling ahead in the direction they are traveling and simply wait for the birds to work into range. If they spot you, though, the best tactic is to rush at the turkeys quickly and try to flush them so they fly in several different directions. Then set up and try to call them back.

✓ When scattering a flock, put your shotgun down, rush into the birds whooping and hollering. The aim is to get the birds to fly off in as many directions as possible, so they become lonely and try to regroup by calling.

✓ Either stop at the flush site or walk 25 to 75 yards in the direction most of the birds flew, then set up against a tree as thick as your body and wait. When birds start calling (usually within 30-90 minutes) imitate the call they are using. Generally kee kees are best, though clucks and yelps work at times. Don't overcall.

✓ As you attempt to call in birds from a scattered flock, keep your knees up and your gun propped over your left knee (if you're right handed), pointing in the direction the turkey is calling from. Make any final adjustments necessary as the bird comes into range only when its head is behind a tree.

✓ Aim at the head and neck and keep your cheek down tight on the stock. Make sure the bird is within clean range with no brush in the way before squeezing the trigger. After shooting a turkey, keep your gun aimed right on the bird. If it attempts to get up and flee, fire a second shot.

✓ Don't get discouraged if you don't succeed the first day out. Fall turkey hunting is not easy. There may be days when you walk five, even ten miles without seeing so much as a feather. In time, though,



Lloyd Hill

(Facing page) Finding where the birds are roosting at night can sometimes guarantee success in the morning.

(Above) Camouflage will help the fall turkey hunter, but blaze orange can save his life.

you'll find turkeys. And when you rush into a flock of 20 or 30 of the huge black and brown birds and send them flying, then succeed in calling one of them back and bagging it on a crisp autumn afternoon with the smell of fresh fallen leaves

in the air, you'll have experienced one of hunting's sweetest pleasures.

Gerald Almy has been a full-time outdoor writer for over 19 years. He is currently a hunting and fishing editor on the staff of Sports Afield.

In The Thick Of



by David Hart

Turkey hunters listen for the distinctive gobble of a nearby tom; deer hunters look for scratchings or rubbings; waterfowlers scan the skies for a distant flock of ducks; and quail hunters anticipate the burst of a dozen birds rising from underfoot.

In a perfect outdoor world, hunters would anticipate and hit successfully every curveball nature throws at them. But surprise is expected in the outdoors, especially while hunting. Just ask any quail hunter.

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE



Lloyd Hill

Quail hunters have to know where and how to locate the birds. Clearly hunters who use good bird dogs have the upper hand over quail hunters who rely on legwork and persistence. A well-trained, sharp-nosed pointer will go places a two-legged hunter can't and will sniff out just about every covey in the area. But the time, expense, and effort associated with keeping a dog are often too much for many bird hunters.

What's a dogless quail hunter to do? Well, pretty much the same thing a bird hunter with a blue-rib-bon dog does, only twice as much.

Finding quail means doing plenty of pre-season homework. But that doesn't always mean actually finding the birds before opening day ar-

Quail hunting today often means brush busting for singles.

rives. It simply means finding the necessary ingredients and gaining access to likely-looking habitat. Sometimes, finding the right location to hunt is half the work.

Serious quail hunters should plan on doing plenty of walking and lots of brush busting through the nastiest, thickest cover around. Quail don't hang around in open, unprotected country, and bird hunters, es-

pecially those without a dog, will have to go in and deal with quail habitat.

Of course, sometimes "thick" can be too thick. Ideally, quail like an overhead canopy for protection from flying predators and relatively open ground for ease of walking. If the underbrush is too thick, the birds will have a hard time getting around and simply won't use an area.

On the other hand, an open field with only a few sparse clumps of tall grass or other cover doesn't give quail the protection they need, either.

In other words, ask yourself, "If I were a quail, would I live here? Would I find food and protection from predators here?"

Any successful quail hunter will quickly point out that these little birds are creatures of the edges. Anywhere one type of habitat meets another is a good place to start hunting. The line where a harvested grain field and an overgrown pine cutover meet is perfect. Food lies on the one side of the edge; a quick escape from predators lies on the other.

Look for telltale signs of quail. Nighttime roosts—easily distinguished by the dinner plate-sized pile of brown and white droppings—are the most recognizable hint that birds have been in the area. And if they were there before, it's a pretty good bet they're still somewhere in the neighborhood. Occasionally, these little birds will leave tracks in soft, sandy or muddy soil. Quail tracks look identical to a miniature turkey or chicken track.

Different types of edges are always worth a look. The line between field and woods, often divided by a line of overgrown briars, honeysuckle or thorny berry bushes will hold birds. And on heavily hunted lands, especially land owned by VDGIF and maintained for quail, the birds might be back in the thick woods where few hunters bother to look.

Perhaps the biggest mistake some quail hunters make is to lose concentration while working through good cover. The saying "when you least



Walking the edge, between the woods and open fields, can be productive for quail hunters, but be alert and expect the unexpected. Photo ©Dwight Dyke.



expect it, expect it" fits perfectly in this type of hunting. Even hunters who rely on good dogs can be caught with their gun resting in the crook of their arms or perched over their shoulder and miss an opportunity at a covey rise.

In a perfect world, quail hunters would jump a covey, drop a few birds and move onto the next covey. Instead, most hunters get a shot or two during the initial covey rise and then hunt the scattered, individual birds. That's why it's so important to watch the birds as they head for safer ground. Often, quail don't fly more than a hundred yards or so and it's possible to get a good mark on where they set down and then go hunt the single birds. Just remember, it's good to leave a few for next season.

Every serious bird hunter has a favorite gun, but for the average quail hunter, the best gun is the one he or she is most comfortable with. As long as it shoots straight, is light enough to carry through the brush all day and has a relatively open choke, it's a good quail gun.

Quail hunting, like any other type of hunting, isn't about the number of



Lloyd Hill

birds in the game bag. It's about getting outdoors, searching for birds and hearing the covey rise as the birds fly deeper into thick, thorny cover. And the hunt is on. □

David Hart is an outdoor writer for various Northern Virginia papers.

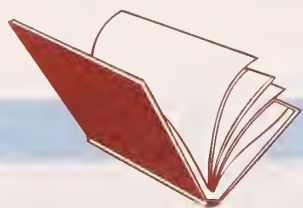


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"The Board of Game and Inland Fisheries has adopted a Quail Management Plan that will implement an extensive effort to address the problems faced by bobwhite quail populations in Virginia. These solutions include management advice to public and private landowners on increasing the use of warm season grass forages, increasing the use of prescribed burning, greater consideration for wildlife in USDA farm programs, improving utility rights-of-way for quail, establishing first-rate demonstrations of quail habitat, and achieving a greater understanding of the impact of predators on quail populations. VW will cover the management plan in detail next spring." - the Editors.



David Hart

Gravelly Point Boat Ramp Dedication

by David Hart

Between the roar of incoming and departing jets, Gravelly Point Boat Ramp was officially opened on August 8 in a ceremony attended by Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries Director William Woodfin, Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources Becky Norton Dunlop, National Capital Area Field Director for the National Park Service Robert G. Stanton and U.S. Congressman James P. Moran.

Gravelly Point, located on the Potomac River just north of National Airport, is the only free public boat ramp on the Virginia side of the tidal section of the river and has been in use for nearly 30 years. Increased popularity in both fishing and pleasure boating on the river had taken a toll on this popular boat launching facility and repairs and improvements were long overdue.

According to Dunlop, recreational fishing provides 11,000 jobs to Virginia and an estimated \$700 million dollars to the economy.

"If we don't have boat ramps, people won't fish," said Dunlop at the ceremony. "It makes good economic sense to have improved access to the waters around the state."

Of the \$205,000 spent on the improvements, \$75,000 was contributed by the VDGIF. The remaining cost was funded by the National Park Service.

The improvements were designed to facilitate easier and quick-

er boat launching in order to allow for the high volume of boat traffic during the peak boating season.

Three new piers have been added, including a straight center pier and two L-shaped docks, which can accommodate 20 ten-foot boats. These piers are handicap-accessible.

The new, 86-foot wide ramp is divided into four 80-foot lanes. This is 16 feet longer than the old ramp, which was too short for larger boats to be launched at low tide. Now, boats up to 35 feet long can launch here.

The parking area was also improved with additional parking spaces, a new turnaround and boat preparation area, a wider exit road and improved lighting. As many as 54 cars with trailers can now park here.

Gravelly Point is open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. year round and can be reached from the George Washington Memorial Parkway. □



Lee Walker

Morgan Award for 1995 Presented

by Spike Knuth

John Dodson, of Culpeper County, a volunteer hunter education instructor for the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries was presented the William Dixon Morgan Memorial Award for 1995. Dodson was cited for his efforts in organizing and instructing five hunter education classes in Culpeper County, including spring turkey and fall muzzleloading seminars. He has recruited eight new instruc-

tors in the last two years, has assisted in conducting the Hunter Education Championships at the Holliday Lake 4-H camp for the past several years, as well as assisting in advanced training workshops.

He is certified by the National Rifle Association (NRA) to instruct rifle, pistol, shotgun, and home firearm safety, and was named the Virginia Wildlife Federation Hunter Educator of the year in 1994.

The William Dixon Memorial Award is administered by the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries and supported by a trust fund established by Mr. and Mrs. William Morgan of Madison Heights, in memory of their son, who was killed in a hunting accident in 1983. The Morgan Award annually recognizes the person who has made the outstanding contribution to the Hunter Education Program during the year.

In addition to his regular hunter education classes, Dodson was a pioneer in creating the Cedar Mountain Shooting Sports Club. He has taught shotgun and air rifle basics at the Shenandoah 4-H Camp in Front Royal since 1993, plus air rifle and archery classes at the American Legion and for the Boy Scouts, along with numerous other hunter education activities. □

Not Just For Trophy Bucks!

by Spike Knuth

The Radford Army Ammunition Plant (RAAP), probably better known as the Radford Arsenal has gained notoriety in recent years for the big rack bucks that have found refuge there. In recent years through special managed permit hunts, these deer have provided some excellent hunting opportunities.

Wildlife Biologist Supervisor, Betsy Stinson, of Blacksburg, said that about 2,400 acres of the RAAP unit near Dublin, Virginia is hunted.

Each year, the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries receives over 1,400 applications for about 200 permits to hunt the area. It is a popular place for the handicapped to hunt as well, with wheel chair-accessible hunting platforms available.

To qualify for a buck hunt, hunters first must participate in an antlerless (doe) hunt to help manage the herd's numbers. Once they are qualified and drawn for a buck hunt, "hunters are encouraged to choose their targets carefully, and to harvest mature bucks only," said Stinson, "preferably those with a 15-1/2 inch or more antler spread."

The deer herd here is carefully monitored. Spotlight counts are conducted before and after the special hunts. At this time, biologists record sex ratios as well as fawn-to-doe ratios. This fall helicopter surveys have also been incorporated to get a more accurate count of deer on the area.

The basic habitat at RAAP consists of a lot of open old fields and pastureland, dotted with cedar, pine and scattered hardwoods and small hardwood stands. Stinson said that a number of annual food plots—the first in some time—of sorghum, corn and millet have been planted in 10 plots totalling about 6 or 7 acres, mainly for deer. These annual plots will supplement perennial plantings of alfalfa and clover that have been established for several years.

There's more going on at RAAP than managing deer, Stinson points out. "We have one gang of turkeys seen last fall that consisted of about 40 birds." She reports too, that 57 species of birds have been recorded on the area along with over 22 species of mammals. Next spring, the monitoring of songbirds will resume. During April, May, and June, biologists and volunteers from the New River Valley Bird Club will drive predetermined survey routes and count species and numbers of birds. One species, the loggerhead shrike, which is a species of special concern, has been seen in the open, cedar-dotted fields.

Even some butterfly counts have been made with more to be conduct-

ed in the future. Some small mammal trapping is also going on to help determine what species are living there. There are a number of ponds of variable sizes on the area. This year VDGIF employees Larry Crane and Mike Anderson planted about 3,000 wetland plants around one of the larger ponds which hosts waterfowl, great-blue herons, and kingfishers. Barn owl nesting boxes have been erected in some of the old buildings by Biologist Assistant Joe Watson and Wildlife Worker Marvin Gautier, and bluebird and kestrel houses are scattered throughout the area as well.

One interesting and unique note is that screech owls have been using the metal-roofed wooden post canopies that line the railroad loading docks. Special Projects Biologist, Larry Crane noticed numerous particles laying on the concrete slabs. Investigation revealed many screech owl pellets, indicating that the little owls are roosting under the metal roofs of the docks in good numbers.

RAAP, or the Radford Arsenal, is another of the unique habitats being enhanced for the benefit of all wildlife. □

Bears are Still Providing More Data

by Spike Knuth

Wildlife Biologist Supervisor, Betsy Stinson, and Special Projects Biologist, Larry Crane, process a young, female black bear (*right*) taken in a snare on Butt Mountain, near Mountain Lake in Giles County.

Using an ATV to get far back into bear country, Stinson and Crane set snares in a variety of ways. Some, called trail sets, are set on worn paths that lead to some irresistible sweet or stinky bait. Or they'll use what is called a cubby set which, Stinson explained, is a lean-to made of 3 to 4 foot long, 3 or 4-inch thick branches, constructed around a tree. A snare is attached to the tree, and the bait is set inside the shelter. The bait draws the bear into the shelter and when it steps on the snare's trig-



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ger, the bear is captured. This 95 pound, 2-year-old female couldn't resist the old lemon meringue pie.

This trapped bear was immediately tranquilized and carefully removed from the snare. The bear was weighed, sex recorded and a number of measurements taken and recorded, such as length, girth, paw and skull size. A tooth sample was taken and numbered tags were affixed to each ear.

Once all the data is gathered and the bear was fitted with a radio-collar, it was given an antagonist injection to enable it to come out of its stupor, and bear #150 went on its way in the rich, forested highlands of Giles County, providing biologists with vital information about its travels and range. □

Fly Fishing Seminars Scheduled for Northwest River Park

by Mitchell Norman and David Narr

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) will team up with Fly Fishing Virginia, Trout Unlimited, and Northwest River Park in Chesapeake to offer fly-fishing and fly-tying semi-

nars again this year. The seminars will be taught by Ron Bennett and Bob Crawshaw of Fly Fishing Virginia, a private guide service. The subject matter will include the mechanics of fly-fishing and casting, proper gear, insect life cycles, fishing etiquette and fly-casting techniques. Members of the Southeast Virginia Chapter of Trout Unlimited will be there to demonstrate fly-tying and help participants tie their own flies. Fly Fishing Virginia and TU volunteers will be on hand to assist interested anglers learn the fine art of casting with a fly rod. The seminars will be held in the activities building at Northwest River Park. Fly casting demonstrations will be at the park lake which will be well stocked with catchable size trout. VDGIF biologists Mitchell Norman and Rick Eades will be on hand to assist in the program. The first seminar is scheduled for Saturday, November 9 at 10 a.m. For the dates of additional seminars and further information, contact Northwest River Park at 757-421-3145 or 421-7151. □

Bears And NASCAR Team Up In Virginia

by Pat Keyser

Southside native and Winston series NASCAR driver Ward Burton has always loved the outdoors. In recent years he has been able to put this love into action on his Halifax County farm where he and his children spend time when he is not racing. In 1996 Ward took a giant step toward helping wildlife well beyond his farm. He established the Ward Burton Wildlife Foundation, a non-profit enterprise that has as its major goal the support of wildlife conservation throughout the Commonwealth.

This summer Burton teamed up with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries to help the emerging population of black bears in Southside. Game Department biologists are seeing a slow but steady increase in bears in this rural part of Virginia. Bears lived in the area historically, but until the 1980s

had been largely absent from the forests of the region. Because of expansion of populations to the west, and especially to the southeast, these animals began migrating back into the area. For nearly a decade now, reports of sows with cubs have been on the rise. This is important not only because it confirms that a population is being established, but because it means that the population is growing from two sources.

Part of the message being sent by the cooperative effort is to let people know that seeing a bear, while a rare treat, is no cause for alarm. Dennis Martin, the Department's bear biologist noted that there are no documented cases of unprovoked attacks by these very shy animals in the history of the Commonwealth.

For those that aren't interested in trying, the Burton Foundation has provided something extra to help the Department help bears. A reward. According to Bill Powers, a veteran of the Agency's Law Enforcement Division, there has been a number of bears killed illegally in this part of the state over the years. "This reward will hopefully keep people from making a mistake while hunting," he said. "And if it doesn't," he continued, "this \$1000 reward may give us the information we need to successfully solve the case." Currently, penalties can run as high as \$3500 and possible imprisonment for illegally killing a bear in Virginia.

"We are extremely pleased to have this type of cooperation with the Foundation," said Bob Duncan, Director of the Department's Wildlife Division. "Without Ward's enthusiasm and dedication we would not be able to take this important step."

Anyone interested in learning more about the Foundation or helping can get information by calling them at 1-800-358-4608 □

Editors' Note:

In the October 1996 issue of *Virginia Wildlife* an article entitled "Before The Hunt Sight in Your Rifle." was published. The editors regret

that because of space considerations and deadlines, we were unable to publish the full article. Because of the importance of firearms safety and our continued emphasis on responsibility in the field, the editors felt strongly that a condensed version of the article needed to go in immediately, so the information could be used by our readers before hunting season began. However, because the information in the full article is critical to the Department's mission to manage wildlife in the Commonwealth, we plan to publish the complete article in the August 1997 issue of *Virginia Wildlife*. The article is one of the best possible summaries we could make available to our readers, regarding sighting in a rifle. We think that you will find the additional information to be of great help, whether you're planning to hunt or spend time at the shooting range. □

The Perfect Gift

If you are struggling this holiday season to find the ultimate Christmas gift for the sportsman who has everything, then we have the answer. Give the gift that will last forever, **a lifetime hunting and fishing license.**

Sportsmen and women across the Commonwealth are finding out that buying a lifetime hunting and fishing license is a sure way of fighting inflation. Giving a lifetime hunting or fishing license is a perfect way for parents or grandparents to ensure your child a lifetime of wonderful memories.

Basic lifetime hunting and fishing licenses cost only \$250.00 each and may be purchased directly through the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. For more information call (804) 367-1076.

Remember, this gift will last a **LIFETIME.**





Law Line

Preparation is the Key for Opening Day

by Carol B. Mawyer

It's only 11:00 p.m., but it's been dark for more than four hours. A deep green vehicle eases down the rural road passing an occasional darkened home. The few houses are nestled between alternating acres of soy beans, corn and white pines. The driver makes his way the last half mile to the spot where he stops. He knows exactly where to pull in; he's been here many, many times before.

He backs his vehicle into a narrow opening in a stand of pines. He turns off the ignition and waits. His eyes have already adjusted to the darkness. Then he sees them—across the road and at the far end of the bean field just at the edge of the woods. The does come first, followed by the more cautious buck.

However, it isn't the beauty of the graceful herd of white-tailed deer or even the stately ten-point buck that's lured this driver here one or two nights a week during the last month. Word has it, occupants of another vehicle have been spotlighting here hoping to nail the buck.

The general season for deer opens tomorrow. The fellow in the green vehicle is willing to bet a day of vacation the guy in the truck will try to take the buck tonight, yet wait until after daylight tomorrow to check it. A Virginia game warden sits in the stillness of the night waiting and watching.

Opening day of general firearms is the third Monday of November. The long, tepid summer of enforcing boating and fishing laws has finally come to an end and the strong majority of Virginia's wildlife officers are more than ready for the cool, crisp days and nights of deer season.

Sergeant Charlie Mullins, a war-

den in Giles County, said one of the reasons he became a game warden was the opportunity it afforded him to be outdoors in the woods. "I love to work deer season," he said.

Game wardens prepare for the opening day of deer season in much the same way the serious hunter does. Both become intimately familiar with the land and its geography. They learn to identify the places deer bed down and delicate trails they weave through the woods. Both know where and when the deer run. They recognize established stands of long-time hunters and the careless marks left by less experienced hunters.



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But officers take these preparations even further. They develop a mental map of property boundaries and the sites known for illegal activities. They become walking directories of names and phone numbers of landowners.

"I try to check with my landowners to make sure there have been no changes with the ownership of the land and to see how they want to work things," said Officer Robbie Everidge of Greensville County. "I touch base with hunt clubs to review any rule changes and to let them know things we're looking for and how we can help each other have a good, safe season.

Occasionally officers also find it necessary to visit the county courthouse to reaffirm property lines in disputable areas and touch base with corporations which own large tracts of land to verify areas that are posted.

Because of the intensity of deer season, routine training (held on a quarterly basis) is planned well in advance. Game wardens are trained extensively in all aspects of law enforcement. "Completing this training prepares the officer and heightens awareness to the ever present dangers of the job," said Lt. Bobby Mawyer who is responsible for the training of the Department's sworn officers. "Scheduling sessions early allows the officer to focus on enforcement activities during this extremely busy time of the year."

Hunting season can pose family challenges as well. "I tell my wife she'll see me when she sees me," said Officer Bruce Lemmert. Regular meals become a thing of the past. Although many wardens carry extra food with them, Sgt. Mullins rarely takes the time to even pack a lunch. Instead he opts for the traditional game warden fare—a Coke and a pack of nabs.

This year an estimated 210,000 deer will be harvested during Virginia's 13-week season which begins October 5 for archery, November 4 for muzzleloading and November 18 for rifle and shotgun. More than 100 Virginia game wardens will be working the same fields and woods in which an increasing number of hunters hope to shoot their trophy buck. And many of these officers will start the night before...to ensure that poachers don't get the jump on legal hunters, ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity at getting that ten-pointer.



by Col. William Antozzi, Boating Safety Officer

Now's The Time to Winterize

I was recently talking to my friend Jon Mabon about boat care and he said that I should remind everyone that occasional cold weather means freezing temperatures are on the way. Jon has owned and operated many boats and is aware of the damage which can occur if boat motors are not properly winterized.

If proper steps are taken, spring-time will find the winterized boats in good shape and ready to go.

Engines should be run long enough to thoroughly heat them so the engine oil is warm enough to flow easily. The oil should be drained and replaced. The oil in most inboard engines must be removed by pumping it out through the dipstick hole, by means of a small hand or electric pump.

If boats have fuel, air and oil filters they should be replaced. A good time to replace the oil filters is after the old oil has been removed and before new oil has been added.

Stern drives and outboards should have lower unit oil drained and replaced because water can get in and cause damage. If the fuel tanks cannot be drained and flushed clean, they should be filled to the brim to prevent condensation and reduce oxidation. Air entering the fuel tanks causes oxidation, a process creating resin which can clog the fuel system. A little room should be left to add a gasoline stabilizer and conditioner.

Boats with liquid closed cooling systems do not use the water in which the boats are setting, to cool the engines. Closed systems are winterized the same as a car engine. This is a good time to check for leaks.

Engines which use the water upon which the vessel floats as the coolant, need antifreeze pumped

through the cooling systems. Low points in the system which retain water will be protected from freezing. Care must be taken to insure that engines are thoroughly warmed so that thermostats are open allowing the antifreeze to penetrate throughout all spaces. The EPA has ruled recently, that antifreeze must be potable or drinkable type because when boat engines are operated in the spring, the antifreeze will be released into the water.

Some water intakes on stern drives are a little difficult to get to. A simple solution is to purchase an inexpensive set of "earmuffs" which fit over the water intakes. A piece of garden hose from the bucket of antifreeze to the "earmuffs" will provide the antifreeze a route to the water intakes.

Some people merely drain their cooling systems. That method is alright provided all drain plugs are opened and all low areas properly drained. If one plug is missed, however, there could be trouble.

When I am satisfied that I have sufficient antifreeze in my vessel engines, I dump transmission oil into the carburetors of my running engines which causes them to immediately choke and stall. The resultant fogging of the engine interiors protects the pistons and valves against rust and corrosion and protects the carburetor interiors. I then put a piece of light flexible plastic over the carburetors and replace the backfire flame arrestors on top of the carburetors to hold the plastic in place. Outboards should have rust inhibiting oil sprayed into their carburetor air intakes. The power head should be sprayed with an anti-corrosive. Outboards may remain mounted

during storage. If boats are left in the water all winter, the outboard motors should be in the down or vertical position so that any water will run out.

Vessels with drinking water systems need to have the water drained and replaced with potable antifreeze. Hot water tanks must also be drained and potable antifreeze added. Heads (toilets) which contain water must also be drained. Adding antifreeze will get to low places which continue to hold water. All seacocks must be closed.

Batteries must be kept charged. If fully charged, they will not freeze, even at minus 70° F. It is best to bring batteries inside for the winter, and store them on wooden blocks, but boats left in the water need them to power the bilge pumps. Clean terminals are important and the use of distilled water insures that harmful minerals are not introduced into the cells.

Electrical connections should be cleaned with 400-grit sandpaper and sprayed with moisture displacing oil. The critical connections are those on the starter, solenoid, engine ground and alternator connections.

Electronic equipment such as radios, hailers and depth finders should be removed and stored in a warm, dry place. All connections should be marked to facilitate reinstallation. Fiberglass surfaces may be waxed and metal fittings coated with petroleum jelly.

Boats left in the water should be checked frequently, since ice can exert tremendous pressure against boat hulls.

Environmental note: drained oil may be turned into certain service stations which accept it for recycling. □

NOVEMBER AFIELD

by Jack Randolph

If there is a month that can be called "The Sportsman's Month" it has to be November. It all comes together this month and whatever your outdoor pursuit, November holds something for you.

One reason for November's popularity among sportsmen is because virtually every fish, fowl or other critter can be fished for, hunted or trapped this month. It is a month that sees the last of the leaf fall, thrills to the calls of migrating geese and listens to the sweet melody of hounds in full cry.

After a long off-season, pickup trucks again carry dog boxes as the houndsman return to the countryside. Beagles once more pursue rabbits and in the eastern part of the state deer hunters savor the sounds of the chase. The eastern deer hunt with its hounds and hunt clubs is perhaps the most gregarious of hunts, a hunt steeped in traditions that date back to days before Old Glory was born. Of course the hounds don't open up until the third Monday, after the bowhunters close their season and the last shots from muzzleloaders have echoed through the forest.

In the western part of the state, in the blue haze of the mountains, deer hunters stalk silently in the woods, but late in the month the sounds of hounds in full cry announce the opening of the bear season.

November is the month for hunting grouse and woodcock. There are limited opportunities for turkey hunting and for waterfowling, but not by a long shot does hunting own the month. November is also for fishermen.

November is a heck of a bass fishing month. Fishermen are the beneficiaries of a bass feeding spree as they stoke up for the colder, leaner months ahead. Last year, for example, a 9-pound largemouth was caught from Chickahominy Lake by

an angler using a tiny minnow intended for crappie. All of Virginia's great bass waters are active now. Lake Anna, the Chickahominy Lake and River, the tidal James River, Buggs Island Lake and Lake Gaston are all turned on, not only for bass, but for crappie as well.

At Buggs Island Lake November is a time when white bass and striped bass attack the tightly packed schools of shad minnows on the surface. Big flathead catfish have been known to take live baits aimed at stripers. The cooling waters of this month awakens those giant stripers at Smith Mountain Lake and such good striper lakes as Anna, Western Branch, Waller Mill, Meade, Chesdin, Buggs Island, Claytor, and Gaston.

This is also an excellent month for catching big blue catfish from the James and Rappahannock Rivers. Over the years several catfish topping 50 pounds were landed this month and optimistic catfishermen expect this year to be at least as good.

In the western part of the state the trout season remains open year round and sufficient numbers of

trout remain in the streams to attract anglers who, hopefully, will be wise enough to wear some blaze orange. Those big brown trout at Lake Moomaw generally bite well this month. Last year at this time anglers were catching them casting Acme Castmasters from shore.

If one species of fish "owned" November, it has to be the striped bass. The striped bass season in tidal waters is open this month, pumping a much needed shot of dollars into the sportfishing economy. Last year the weather was a problem. Although the season opened in mid-October there were nine consecutive weekends of bad weather that severely curtailed fishing. Hopefully, the weather will be better this year.

However, November is also the time when Virginia's fish of winter begin to assert themselves. The waters around the rocky islands of the Bridge Tunnel and the Concrete Ships commence to yield tautogs to anglers who would rather catch them than anything else.

So there, you have it. Whatever your persuasion the eleventh month has something for you. □



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Photo TipS

By Lynda Richardson

A Photographer's Holiday Wish List

This year is going to be different. I'm going to have all my holiday shopping done before December 16th. I swear! It has nothing to do with the fact that I'll be on my way to Antarctica on December 16th and have no clue when I'm coming back. (In fact, everyone insists on getting their presents before I leave. Hmmm.) But seriously, in my maturing years, I've gotten more organized and more productive with my time. (Don't try to verify this with my husband.) For example, I thought it would be more efficient to have a holiday gift idea column in November instead of December!

When I think of the cold, winter holidays, I dream of curling up to a glowing fire with a steamy cup of hot chocolate, two Jack Russell terriers, the hubby and a good book. In my family, books have traditionally been on the top of the giving and receiving list as long as I can remember. Your Christmas wealth was judged by how many good books you received that year. So, the following is a list of books you might consider as gifts this year; *Magnificent Moments: The World's Greatest Wildlife Photographs*, edited and introduced by George H. Harrison, Willow Creek Press, hardback \$35.00, *Jolm Shaw's Business of Nature Photography*, by John Shaw, Amphoto Books, hard cover, \$35.00, *Photographing on Safari* by Joe McDonald, Amphoto Books, paperback, \$19.95, *Nature Photography: National Audubon Society Guide*, written and photographed by Tim Fitzharris, Firefly Books, paperback, \$19.95 and *Polar Dance; Born of the North Wind*, photographed by Tom Mangelsen and written by Fred Bruemmer. All of these beautiful, informative

books are very fitting for the most selective nature photography book collector.

How about a membership to the North American Nature Photography Association (NANPA)? This exciting organization offers a bi-monthly newsletter, member discounts and an annual meeting at different North American locations each year. At the meeting, nature photographers, amateur and professional, photo editors, and magazine publishers from all over the world meet to discuss what's happening in the field today. Slide lectures, workshops and panel discussions make

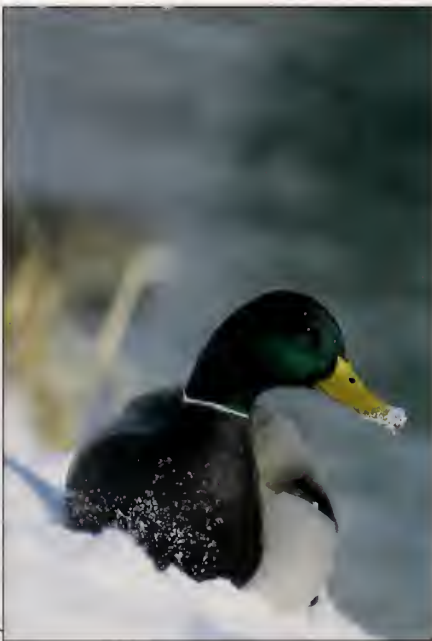
or write to: North American Nature Photography Association, 10200 West 44th Ave., Suite 304, Wheat Ridge, CO 80033-2840, (303) 422-8527.

Photographers always need more film so how about buying your photographer a few rolls of the new slide films created by Kodak. Look for Ektachrome E100S and E100S, both excellent films with fabulous color saturation and fine grain. The "S" stands for saturated and "SW" for saturated warm. (Look for my up-coming article on the new Ektachrome films this spring!)

Before searching for the perfect gift for the nature photographer on your list, consider the suggestions above. You have plenty of time now and no excuses...unless you plan to join me in Antarctica! Happy Holidays! □

News You Can Use

During the month of November, I will have an exhibition of my work in the gallery of the National Wildlife Federation's headquarters in Vienna, Virginia. I would like to invite all of my readers to view the work and let me know what you think. The National Wildlife Federation can be found at 8925 Leesburg Pike which is near Dulles Airport and Wolftrap. The gallery is open Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you want to pick up a few holiday gifts while you're there, the National Wildlife Federation gift shop has a fabulous selection of nature-related gifts. You can even purchase limited edition photographs of images from my exhibition, some of which have appeared in *Virginia Wildlife* magazine!



Lynda Richardson

Mallard drake w/snow on beak: "Keep your nose to the grindstone when searching for gifts this holiday season! Get it done now!"

up this worthwhile event. This year's meeting is in Corpus Christi, Texas from January 16-19th, 1997. Membership dues are only \$50.00 per year. For more information call

Recipes

By Joan Cone

A Festive Venison Dinner

The following recipe using ground venison with no fat added contains far less fat than if you used ground beef. For instance, 100 grams of ground lean beef has ten grams of fat, while the same amount of ground venison has only four grams of fat.

MENU

Lemon Marinated Mushrooms

Venison Loaf Wellington

Cauliflower And Broccoli Bake

Pineapple Bake

Joan's Fruit Cake

Lemon Marinated Mushrooms

1 pound mushrooms, thickly sliced
 $\frac{3}{4}$ cup salad or vegetable oil
Grated peel of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon
Juice of 1 lemon
1 teaspoon dried oregano leaves, crushed
1 teaspoon garlic salt
 $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon pepper

In large bowl, combine all ingredients; cover. Marinate in refrigerator 4 or more hours, stirring occasionally. Or marinate in a tightly sealed plastic bag, fuming occasionally. Serve as an appetizer with toothpicks or with plates and forks. Garnish with parsley and lemon slices, if desired. Makes about 4 cups.

Venison Loaf Wellington

1 egg
1 pound ground venison
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup seasoned bread stuffing mix
3 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese
Salt and pepper to taste
Onion powder to taste
1 tablespoon chopped parsley
1 egg
1 tablespoon water
1 package (8) refrigerated crescent rolls

Preheat oven to 350°. Lightly beat 1 egg in medium size mixing bowl. Add ground venison, stuffing mix, cheese, seasonings and parsley; combine thoroughly. Form into a loaf about 8 x 4-inches and place in a greased, oblong baking dish. Beat remaining egg with water. Separate rolls and lay over top and sides of loaf so that the loaf is completely covered with rolls. Seal edges of rolls with egg-water glaze. Brush with remaining glaze and bake 1 hour. Serves 4 to 5.

Cauliflower and Broccoli Bake

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups chopped cauliflower
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups chopped broccoli
1 tablespoon margarine or butter
1 tablespoon flour
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup milk
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup chicken stock or bouillon
2 ounces goat cheese
2 tablespoons diced sweet red pepper

Topping

$\frac{1}{3}$ cup wheat bran breakfast cereal
1 teaspoon margarine or butter
 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic

Steam or microwave cauliflower and broccoli until just tender. Drain and place in baking dish. In small saucepan, melt margarine; add flour and cook, stirring, for 1 minute. Add milk and stock; cook, stirring continuously, until thickened, about 5 minutes. Remove from stove. Stir in goat cheese until melted; pour over vegetables. Sprinkle red pepper over top.

Topping

In food processor, combine cereal, margarine and garlic; process using on/off motion until crumbly. Sprinkle over vegetables. Broil until browned, approximately 2 minutes. Serves 4.

Pineapple Bake

3 eggs, beaten
1 stick butter ($\frac{1}{4}$ pound) melted
4 pieces regular white bread, crumbled
1 can (20 ounces) crushed pineapple, undrained
 $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar

Preheat oven to 425°. Beat 3 eggs and add remaining ingredients. Mix well and pour into a 2-quart baking dish or casserole. Bake for 25 minutes. Serve hot. Serves 4 to 6.

Joan's Fruit Cake

1 cup butter, softened
1 cup sugar
4 eggs, separated
 $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon salt
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon nutmeg
1 cup dried currants
1 cup golden raisins
1 cup fruit cake mix

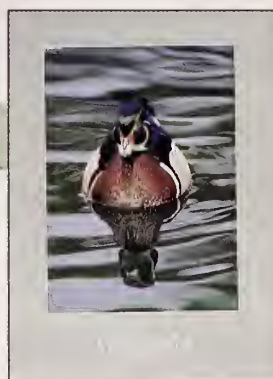
Preheat oven to 350°. Grease two 8 x 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch loaf pans or a 9-inch tube pan. Whip until stiff, but not dry, the 4 egg whites and salt; set aside. In an electric mixer, blend butter and sugar until they are creamy. Beat in the 4 egg yolks, one at a time. Flour the fruit with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup of the flour. Combine the remaining 2 cups flour with the baking powder and nutmeg and mix slowly into the batter. Stir in the 3 cups of floured fruit. Fold the beaten egg whites, lightly, into the batter. Spoon batter into the prepared pans and bake for 1 hour or until cake tests done. When cakes are cool, pour brandy over the tops, wrap in a cloth and place in a covered container. Store in a cool place. Slice thinly when serving. □

To enjoy Joan Cone's game cooking course on the Internet, enter the following code.

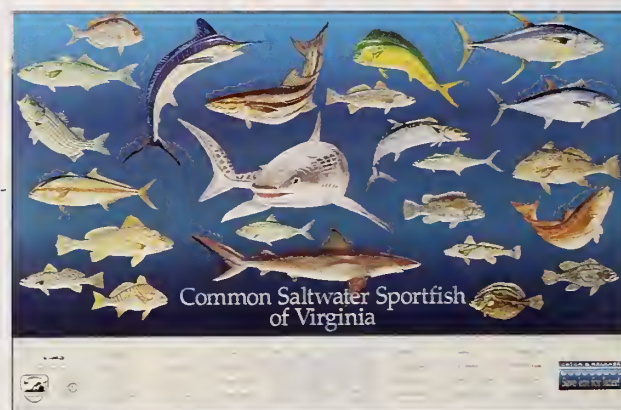
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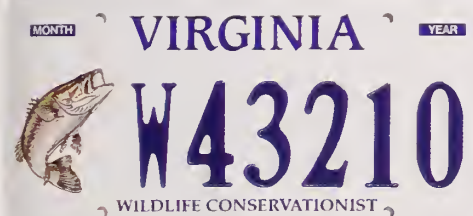


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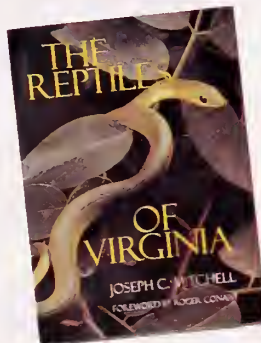
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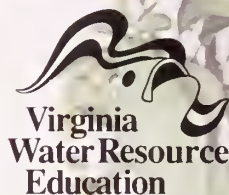
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